

St. Anthony's Wilderness

Reflections of a Visitor – Volume 6



Passion for the outdoors and one particular place,
St. Anthony's Wilderness, has inspired this.

Stony Mtn Man

Acquisition

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed.” ¹

“A land purchase of outstanding interest and importance to the public, especially to the large number of sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts in Dauphin, Lebanon, and Schuylkill Counties, was announced by Governor Edward Martin in December 1943 ... This project comprises approximately 37, 762 acres of forest covered mountains in northern Dauphin and Lebanon Counties ... These lands, which originally totalled more than 40,000 acres, were formerly owned by the Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company, having been in its possession for more than half a century ... The Grand View Coal Company became the record owner in 1938. It later transferred about 2300 acres to the City of Harrisburg for use in connection with its water system ... For the Commission now to be able to purchase what constitutes a huge acreage in a densely populated section of the State is exceedingly fortunate.” ²

“Of interest to nature lovers is the fact that American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) is found on a few spots in Stony Creek Valley. This beautiful evergreen shrub, with its red berries, commonly used for Christmas decorations, is not found in any abundance in Pennsylvania, it being a species growing in abundance in Southern States. The comparatively small amount found here will receive added protection through Commonwealth ownership. The penalty for removing it from State Game Lands is \$25 for each plant.” ² “Although this is not the northern-most limit for the trees, it is the largest stand of these trees in the species' northern range.” ³



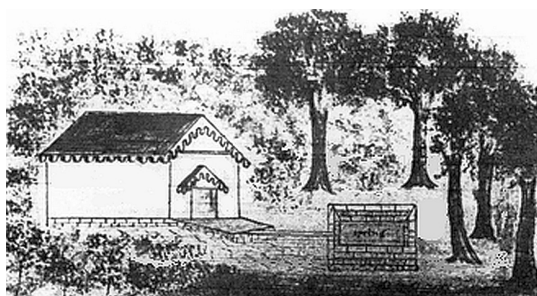
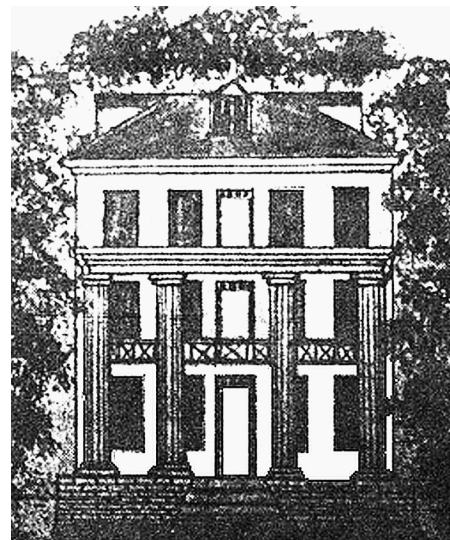
¹ Mahatma Gandhi – leader of the independence movement in British-ruled India, to justify his assassination, apologists have said that *Gandhiji* supported a separate state for *Muslims*. He did not. *Gandhiji* respected all religions, equality of all men and believed in non-violence. The creation of Pakistan resulted more from the differences between *Hinduism* and *Islam* – religion and power again.

² *Large Game Tract Acquired*, Pennsylvania Game News (February 1944)

³ *Stony Creek Study: Resource Inventory*, Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources (March 1979)

PHOTO – After Fort Indiantown Gap stated, “No wetlands are located within the 900-acre Alternative 1 area.” The author investigated and found many inclusions of wetlands. Photograph was taken on June 25, 2008.

Purchase of the large tract slightly preceeded a request by the Reading Company to abandon the railroad through Stony Creek Valley. The twin-ribbon of steel laid through the veritable wilderness was abandoned in stages. First, the western end, from Rausch Gap to Dauphin and Rockville, and the “operation under trackage rights over a line of the Pennsylvania Railroad between Rockville and Harrisburg.”¹ Abandonment of the track east of Rausch Gap came later. “With the proposed abandonment of this latter spur (the Dauphin branch to Rausch Gap is long since abandoned), the historic and romantic High Bridge, near Outwood, will be razed. The building of High Bridge and the railroad proper *challenged the genius of some of the best engineers of the East.*”²

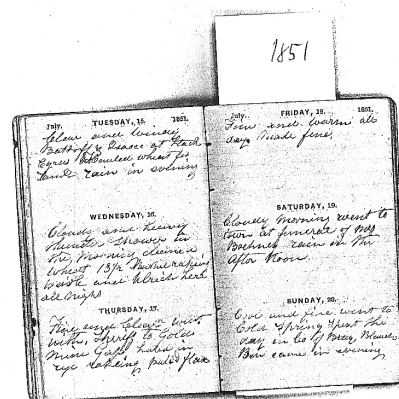


A privately owned interior holding existed, “One tract of about 90 acres at Cold Spring is commonly known as Camp Shand and used during the summer months by boys of the Lancaster Y.M.C.A. This was the site of a hotel and health resort many years ago. The water from Cold Spring is said to have medicinal properties. This tract had once been proposed as the site for a Jesuit

Priests Monastery, but the plan was dropped for some unknown reason.”³

- ¹ *Canal days Recalled By Request to Abandon Old Upper Dauphin Rail Line*, The Evening News, Harrisburg, PA (November 30, 1944)
- ² *Historic Railroad to Be Abandoned After Century of Service*, The Evening News, Harrisburg, PA (December 28, 1948)
- ³ *Large Game Tract Acquired*, Pennsylvania Game News (February 1944)
- ⁴ *A 'Forsaken Place,' Cold Springs Township is rich in history, legend*, Sunday Focus Magazine (July 17, 1983)

INSETS – The black and white images (above) are from the article, *A 'Forsaken Place.'* Both images are actually watercolors, created by William Rank in 1851. The painting of the hotel (above right) is dated July 20, 1851 and signed *W Rank*. The bathhouse (above left) is dated August 2, 1851 and signed. “The watercolors, donated by the Stony Valley Coalition to the Lebanon County Historical Society, are the first known depictions of the old hotel.”⁴ William Rank was an associate judge of the Lebanon County Court for 32 years. His diaries are part of the Lebanon County Historical Society's collection. Many decades ago, the author visited and compared entries in his diary to the dates on the watercolors. The inset (above) is a copy of his 1851 diary – there is no mention of artwork, but he visited Cold Spring on both days.



In fact, the desire to acquire the scarred land of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company in Dauphin County originated nearly 25 years before. The *State Forestry Commission* started negotiations “for the purchase of some of the barren mountain land in Jefferson and Rush Townships, held by the Reading Coal and Iron Company. This land adjoins the State game preserve in the upper end of Dauphin County.” ¹

However that same year, the *Dauphin County Commissioners* decided to “return to the attack on the coal land assessments ... The lands in the upper end, whose value is in question, will likely be taken to court.” ² This controversy began several years before when it was discovered that “Dauphin county assesses tracts at \$48 an acre, while the same kind of land on the other side of the Schuylkill county line is assessed at \$218 an acre.” ³



The county commissioners insistence on more revenue from the coal lands undermined the efforts of the State to acquire it. Talks continued through two administrations without success. “At the time the owners held the lands at a prohibitive price, and the governors,⁴ though sympathetically inclined, felt it was asking too much of the taxpayers for the investment.” ⁵

Acquisition of the land from the Grand View Coal Company was finally achieved after the intervention of the *Great Depression* and the beginning of another *World War*. Prior to this large acquisition, only the Haldeman tract ⁶ existed in upper Dauphin County.

¹ *State Plans To Buy Land In Upper Dauphin*, The Evening News, Harrisburg, PA (March 7, 1919)

² *Renew Dauphin Coal Attack*, Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia, PA (May 27, 1919)

³ *Taxes Vary One to Five on Coal Land*, The Patriot, Harrisburg, PA (October 24, 1911)

⁴ *Penn's Woods* was not a sylvan paradise. Governor William Sproul's administration (1919-1923) expanded the state forest land, replenishing the Keystone State after years of degradation by lumber companies. Purchasing land for conservation was not easy. As an example, many owners of the lands sought by the State believed the land might contain reserves of coal, oil, or natural gas. This created prices beyond the reach of the State. Gov. Sproul appointed Gifford Pinchot as *State Commissioner of Forestry* in 1920. Pinchot reorganized the state agency and he became the Nation's expert on forestry. He followed Sproul into the Governor's office (1923-1927 and 1931-1935) and his leadership made conservation of forests an American priority. Here's an interesting detail – the Lieutenant Governor in Sproul's administration was *Edward Beidleman*, remember him from the *William Zartman's* narrative?

⁵ Henry W. Shoemaker, *This Morning's Comment*, Altoona Tribune, Altoona, PA (September 30, 1941)

⁶ This tract was named for Pennsylvania Congressman Richard Jacob Haldeman.

INSET – Pennsylvania Game Commission personnel perched on a gasoline-powered Reading rail car.

A Rocky Ride Up Stony Creek, Pennsylvania Game News (November 1944)

“In the early seventies of 1800, Hon. Richard J. Haldeman, representing Pennsylvania in our National Congress, made a most effective address in Washington upon the question of forestry. For the period of its delivery it was a clear statement of an urgent need, unsurpassed by any American utterance before and by but few since that time. For thirty years each Governor of the Commonwealth has been actively interested in and helped to direct public opinion and legislation to the firm foundation on which our State forestry now stands.” ¹

“In 1902, 3,353 acres was acquired, which established the first tract of State Forest in Dauphin County. The cost of this first parcel was \$5,030. Other parcels totaling 2002 acres were acquired and added to this tract in 1917, 1953 and 1982.” ²

Two notes on an addition of land to the original Haldeman tract, “The survey of the Haldeman State forest, known as the *Elder Lands*, in Dauphin county, was begun in November, 1914 (and completed in 1915).” ¹ “The drafting, tracing, and calculations for the Haldeman Forest, in Dauphin county, occupied nearly all the time of the office force during January, 1917.” ³

Now, let's discuss the *neighbor* to the south, Fort Indiantown Gap, in the context of the 1940s. America is engaged in a global war, Governor Edward Martin offers this recently acquired Game Commission land to the military for training – the U.S. Army refused the offer.

“The fact that the lands which the Game Commission is acquiring is situate adjacent the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation is pleasing to military authorities. Governor Martin recently made the statement, '*The acquisition of this large tract contiguous to the Artillery Range of the famous Indiantown Gap Military Reservation is most timely, as it can be used immediately to aid the war effort if needed.*' Whether or not any portion of the land now being acquired by the Game Commission will be used for military maneuvers is, problematical. It stands to reason, however, that if any State Game Lands can be used to advantage in aiding the war effort, sportsmen whose money makes the purchase possible will be happy over such eventuality.” ⁴

Sportsmen whose money makes the purchase possible. Without the revenue generated by taxing hunters, many of the State Game Lands (SGLs) in Pennsylvania would be nonexistent.

“When the Congress of the United States in 1932 imposed an excise tax of ten percent on sporting firearms, shells and cartridges, a great deal of adverse criticism from sportsmen resulted. Taxes, regardless of their purpose, seldom produce joy, and this tax imposed on sportsmen was no exception.” ⁵

¹ *Report of the Department of Forestry of the State of Pennsylvania for the Years 1914-1915*

² *Haldeman Tract, Weiser State Forest* – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources brochure

³ *Report of the Department of Forestry of the State of Pennsylvania for the Years 1916-1917*

⁴ *Large Game Tract Acquired, Pennsylvania Game News (February 1944)*

⁵ *The Federal Tax on Arms and Ammunition, Pennsylvania Game News (November 1944)*

“Five years of tireless effort (by the leading sportsmen of the country) resulted in the passage of the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid to the States in Wildlife Restoration Act, which was signed by the President Roosevelt on September 2, 1937. It ear-marked revenues derived from the arms and ammunition tax for use in advancing wildlife restoration in all States.”¹

Stony Creek Valley, or State Game Land No. 211, is just one example of land purchased with Pittman-Robertson money. “Secondary recreational uses are permitted in accordance with the Game Commission’s regulations.”² A number of people who never hunt but who do enjoy such nature-related pastimes as birdwatching and nature photography can realize the benefits from Pittman-Robertson money – however, you must observe the PGC's rules.²

For the most part, Pittman-Robertson is one government program that has worked. Pittman-Robertson Act does not restrict use of funds to game species, but instead allows their use for any species of wild bird or mammal. Don't get all *fussy* about this fact – *men and women active in hunting and fishing have paid for wildlife conservation in this country.*

The abuses of Pittman-Robertson trust fund usually occur during a presidential administration not keen on hunting, or, in fact hates hunting. The government toadies, aided by supportive organizations, and like-minded politicians, try to find ways to divert the money.

In 1999, a representative of the U.S. General Accounting Office told the House Resources Committee that conditions at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have *spawned a culture of permissive spending – no routine audit program exists for expenditures.*³

I will not detail all of the abuses, but here's an example. “In December, a scandal broke over a high-profile survey to count threatened Canada lynx. Seven employees from Fish & Wildlife, the Forest Service and a state agency submitted hair samples from captive lynx and tried to pass them off as wild. When caught, the employees claimed they were testing the DNA identification process. Another explanation is that they were attempting to establish lynx in places where they aren't, potentially blocking national forests to human use.”⁴

Forthcoming volumes of *St. Anthony's* will detail the tactics of those who want to destroy this veritable wilderness and how you can stop them. One fact remains, *Pennsylvania licensed hunters cannot be denied access to state game land purchased with the aid of Federal funds (Pittman-Robertson) during a Pennsylvania hunting season.*

¹ *The Federal Tax on Arms and Ammunition*, Pennsylvania Game News (November 1944)

The “Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act” is commonly referred to as “Pittman-Robertson,” named for its sponsors, Nevada Senator Key Pittman and Virginia Congressman Absalom Willis Robertson.

² Pennsylvania Game Commission – <http://www.pgc.pa.gov/>

³ *Management and Oversight of the Federal Aid Program Needs Attention*, Testimony before the Committee on Resources, House of Representatives (July 1999)

⁴ *The Missing Lynx*, The Wall Street Journal (January 24, 2002)

